A New Approach to Monitoring Water Pollution

Carefully, Serigraph employees collect a stream water sample and measure its dissolved oxygen content. Upstream, a group known as the Riverkeepers wade in the water armed with nets and trays to collect benthic macroinvertebrates.

Summer play, you may ask? Not at all ---these local residents are Adopt-A-WATERWAY Volunteers.

Adopt-A-WATERWAY is a new community involvement program directed by the Washington County Land Conservation Department and Riveredge Nature Center. The goal is to coordinate a wide variety of volunteer groups working throughout Washington County with one common purpose: to protect and enhance our waters.

So far... eight trained teams of volunteer monitors, including middle school teachers and local businesses have adopted portions of Washington County streams and rivers.

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Concerns Voiced on Proposed Ordinance

Two area builders associations recently voiced their opinions regarding Washington County's proposed erosion control and stormwater management ordinance. The Land Conservation Committee (LCC) heard their concerns at a public hearing on May 21, and again at their monthly June meeting.

Some areas of concern include:
- ordinance applicability
- time limits for compliance
- term definitions
- third party enforcement
- builders input in ordinance development

All groups represented at the May hearing supported the County's efforts to coordinate local ordinance activities and combining erosion control and stormwater management into a single permit process.

The LCC has agreed to meet with representatives from the builders groups in a working session in July to review the issues they raised in detail. The hearing will remain open for 30 days after the July meeting to accept any further written comments. The LCC will also be discussing the need for future meetings with town officials to answer questions and to help coordinate local ordinance implementation efforts.

Monitoring Cont.

Riverkeeper and Adopt-A WATERWAY Volunteer Rick Emanuel says "the program is exciting and provides the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to protect and conserve our water resources for future generations." He enjoys the opportunity to meet other people who share his enthusiasm for the environment.

"We need your help," explains LCD Education Coordinator, Sue Millin. "Water is a precious resource and needs protection. We need the minds, eyes, ears, and hands of local residents to help us monitor Washington County Watersways. Volunteers who are interested in the well-being of our waters are an excellent and cost efficient means of obtaining water quality data."

Volunteer water quality monitoring is open to anyone who is concerned about the condition of our streams and rivers and is willing to commit their time and energy for training and monitoring.

The next training opportunity is scheduled for Saturday, September 13 at Riveredge Nature Center. Please call Terrie Cooper from Riveredge at 675-6888 or Sue Millin from the Land Conservation Department at 335-4800 for more information.

More trees sold this year than ever...

Thanks to the record interest in this year's tree program, another 53,000 trees and wildlife shrubs have been planted in the Washington County area.

In addition, over 150 lbs of native prairie grass and wildflower seed have been purchased. Together, they provide many new acres of diversity and habitat to our Washington County landscape.

If you are not one of the 520 landowners who participated in the 1997 Tree Program, and are interested in receiving the 1998 order form please call the LCD Office at 414-335-4800. We would be happy to add you to our mailing list!
Ed and Mary Peters, together with their children... Eddie-12, Sarah-10, David-5 and Joseph-16 months have turned Starlite Farm into a profitable and environmentally friendly operation.

Hats off to Peters Starlite Farm

One and a half years ago, Ed and Mary Peters became 4th generation owners of this century farm after buying it from Ed’s parents, Frances and Rita. Peters Starlite Farm is your typical Wisconsin Dairy Farm with one exception...you won’t find a single acre of row crops anywhere on this 45 cow, 80 acre dairy farm.

Several years ago, Ed and Mary knew they needed to make some changes to increase production, improve herd health, and make their operation more enjoyable if they were to continue farming. In 1993, they decided to convert to a system of farming called “Rotational Grazing.” The decision to plant their home farm to grasses and legumes was not easy.

“How could this possibly be a smart use of our land?” the Peters thought. Ed says he still can’t believe he did it, but he and Mary had confidence in their consultant, Rick Scholl. “The key to making a grazing system work is management. If you think you can just plant grass and put your cows on it... then it’s a waste of time and good land,” explains Ed. “But if you closely manage the grass as a crop, and use your cattle to properly harvest it, then productivity will equal or exceed that of conventional crops, and be of higher quality.”

After four years of “grass farming” the Peters can say they are happy with their decision. Milk production is up 2000 lbs., cull rates are down and they are selling more replacement heifers, all with reduced input costs. There are also some intangible benefits of grazing. Ed explains. “The work is more enjoyable and more of it can be done by or along with their kids. Plus, there’s just a certain sense of satisfaction with watching your herd out grazing on fresh pasture.”

To further improve efficiency and decrease the work load, Ed and Mary installed a one-year capacity gravity-flow manure pit a year ago. Although the nutrient savings alone will not pay for the facility, Ed can’t overemphasize the time he saves every day and the reduced wear and tear put on his equipment. Plus, there’s no concern of pollution from winter spread manure. Partial cost-sharing was provided by the Milwaukee River Priority Watershed Program.

With these two changes, Ed and Mary have been able to turn a borderline operation into a more profitable and enjoyable business, while at the same time eliminate the concerns of soil erosion and nonpoint pollution on their farm. And when the day comes, they will be able to hand over their farm, whether here or somewhere else, with pride to the next generation.

Kudos to Peters Starlite Farm for their efforts towards a more profitable and environmentally friendly farm!!!
Fair Park Moves Ahead

On June 17, the Washington County Board made history. After decades of discussion and debate, construction is now under way for the new county fair grounds. But the new site will be much more than a “fair grounds”.

The planners for “Fair Park” envision it being a focal point for a wide variety of year-round activities aimed to improve the quality of life in Washington County. The central location of the site and the master plan both reflect this vision. Some of the major components of the master plan include:

- A grouping of livestock buildings with a central show ring
- A multipurpose building with a large open display/show area
- An outdoor grandstand overlooking an amphitheater/track
- On-site parking for over 5,000 vehicles

The master plan (see map) shows creativity in design and function. The multi-purpose building is the central “hub” of activity. The grandstand utilizes the site’s natural slopes and orientation for lighting. The parking lot for the grandstand will be home to the carnival during the fair. The livestock buildings recognize prevailing winds and separation from the food court. Walking distances are evenly distributed between major attractions and centers on a green space and pond. The road layout separates service vehicles from visitors and maximizes safety with two major entrances/ exits.

The County Board has been debating the scope of the project since preliminary cost estimates of $18 million dollars were released in February. In May, the County’s new Administrative Coordinator, Gordon Ellis, coordinated a team of county staff and consultants to develop a phased construction schedule. The team also revised borrowing plans and initiated discussions for possible cost savings in a few areas.

At their May 13 meeting, the County Board put a $12 million dollar cap on the first phase of the project, which includes all site grading and infra-structure costs (roads, parking, sewer, water, etc.). Under this plan, grading plans will proceed as the discussions continue on possible cost savings.

When bids were opened for the site grading in early June, county officials were pleasantly surprised as the costs were well below earlier estimates. This helped unify the County Board for the June 17 vote to begin grading the site. The first grading will be to construct three ponds around the perimeter of the 133 acre site. These are designed to trap sediment and other pollutants that wash off the site during and after construction.

Key decisions regarding the multi-purpose building and the grandstand still lie ahead for County Board Supervisors. But, in the meantime, progress is being made. Once completed the project promises a bright future for not only fair goers, but for all county citizens.

May 3 River Clean Up a Success!!!

Over 2,500 lbs. of trash were removed from the Milwaukee River by volunteers picking up over seven miles of shoreline in the downtown West Bend area. If you would like to become a WATERWAY Volunteer call Education Coordinator, Sue Millin at 414-335-4800.
Fair Park will be a focal point for a wide variety of year round activities.
Nutrient management is fast becoming an important topic in today’s farm industry. Soil sampling, crediting all sources of fertilizer, whether on farm or commercial sources, and adjusting application rates based on crop needs are all parts of a sound nutrient management plan. Implementing and following a plan should increase profitability, as well as protect water quality.

Through the Milwaukee River Watershed Program the LCD has been offering cost sharing for landowners to develop nutrient management plans. We have however, come upon much resistance. When asked why they don’t want to develop the plans landowners often reply that they only use starter fertilizer and therefore can’t be over applying nutrients. Others feel that it’s just too complicated.

To address these concerns the LCD initiated six demonstration plots. Landowners selected to participate were the Dorn Bros., Enright Farms, Groth Farms, Gilbert Meyer, Louis Scheunemann and Terry Volm.

The goal is to demonstrate that if the soil test results showed that lower amounts of fertilizer are recommended than what the landowner would normally apply, he could go with the recommended amount and show increased profits. We’ve taken eight fields and split them into two parts – one half is fertilized as the landowner always has and the other half was fertilized with the rates recommended from the soil test results. This will be accomplished either through reduced starter rates or lower bulk rates. Tests in other parts of the state have shown that a reduction from 200 pounds to 100 pounds of starter can save roughly $12/acre.

One item that we noticed on the soil test results was that fields where manure was been spread often have high phosphorous and potassium rates but needed additional nitrogen. This has led to a couple of the landowners requesting a different blend of fertilizer than what they would normally use. Some of the landowners are also thinking about reducing their fertilizer rates on other fields that they know have been treated the same as the demo field.

We will know more this fall after taking yield checks so watch for the results at that time. If you’d like to have nutrient management demonstrated on a couple of your fields next year call Troy, Scott or Paul at 414-335-4800.

New CRP Increases Focus on Water

We would like to thank all Washington County landowners who participated in the March Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up. More than 90% of the 1,500 acres offered have been accepted! The goals of the redefined CRP are erosion reduction, improvement of water quality and enhancement of wildlife habitat. In the new program only the most environmentally valuable land is selected.

Through CRP, landowners receive annual rental payments for accepted acreage and cost share payments for getting their land established to protective cover. Those landowners who applied should have been notified of their acceptance by mid June. Contracts are scheduled to begin October 1, 1997 or 1998.

You can still come in and sign-up for CRP practices such as field windbreaks, grass waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, contour grass strips and shallow water areas. If interested...please call Tom at Farm Services Agency at 414-335-4860 for an appointment.
Many youngsters from the county practiced storm drain stenciling at the Land Conservation booth on the Herb Lofy Farm Saturday, June 21. With a theme of “Clean Water One Step at a Time” the WATERWAYS campaign reminds us all to take steps to prevent water pollution.

Take a step, join the stenciling campaign by contacting Sue Millin, Coordinator for the Washington County WATERWAYS Program at 414-335-4800 for more information.

**Bulletin Board**

Any conservation questions, comments or suggestions can be addressed to “Bulletin Board”, Washington County Land Conservation Department, 333 E Washington St., Suite 3200, West Bend, WI 53095. Watch for a response in the next issue!
Where in the County?

Where is this site located?
Write your answer on a 3x5 card along with your name, address & phone number. Mail to: Where in the County? Washington County Land Conservation Department, 333 E. Washington St., West Bend, WI 53095

One correct entry will be drawn to win a quarter pound of native wildflower mix...a $24.00 value!!!

The March “Where In the County?” winner was Susan Yogerst of Hartford. She won 25 trees for her correct identification of the new county stormwater pond located behind the Samaritan Home in West Bend. Congratulations Susan!!!